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Friday, August 15, 2008

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* Important Story



Baby found with pacifier taped in mouth

The Associated Press

Thursday, August 14, 2008

FOWLERVILLE - A Livingston County infant has been taken from its parents after police reported seeing the 4-week-old unsecured in a car's back seat with a pacifier taped in its mouth.

WHMI-FM reports the infant was taken into protective custody Wednesday after a traffic stop by state police in Fowlerville. Police reported seeing the infant in the back without a safety seat and with a pacifier held in place with adhesive tape.

The 19-year-old father and 18-year-old-mother were taken into custody but have been released pending possible charges.

The Ann Arbor News and Livingston County Daily Press & Argus of Howell report authorities placed the baby with its grandparents.

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Death of 3-year-old boy results in murder, abuse charges

By Josh Perttunen
Editor

KALKASKA -A 25-year-old Kalkaska man is being held on a \$2 million bond after the death of a 3-year-old boy has been attributed to his alleged child abuse.

Ê Kalkaska Police Chief Mark Bonofiglio said that the child suffered multiple bruises, which suggest that the abuse may have been going on for a period of nearly a week and a half.

Sheldon McDonald has been charged by Kalkaska County Prosecutor Brian Donnelly with a count of felony murder, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. He is also facing first degree child abuse and open murder charges.

McDonald was the live-in boyfriend of the child's mother. He is a habitual offender with an extensive juvenile record, which includes criminal sexual conduct; there is no reason to suspect sexual abuse in this case, though, Bonofiglio said.

As a habitual offender, McDonald can face up to 1.5 times the max penalty. His bail was already increased due to volatile actions at his arraignment.

Village police, along with EMS units, originally responded to a call coming in Friday evening. The child's injuries were initially attributed to a fall down a stairway, but further investigation uncovered signs of abuse.

The child was first transported by EMS to Munson Medical Center; he was later flown to Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, in Grand Rapids.

Although he fought hard, he succumbed to his most serious injury, a head trauma, Sunday morning. The Gift of Life Foundation was able to donate the boy's heart to a child in need.

Officers from the Kalkaska Village Police Department, Kalkaska County Sheriff Department and the Traverse City and Kalkaska Michigan State Police are continuing to investigate this case.

"This is a case we hate to investigate," Bonofiglio said. "But we are professionals and we have to do our job."

A preliminary examination is set for Aug. 13.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.leaderandkalkaskian.com/stories/081308/loc_1k03.shtml

Woman pleads guilty to voluntary manslaughter

Andrew Sawmiller

[August 13, 2008](#) - A Commerce Township woman who allegedly killed her newborn baby in Erie County, Pennsylvania pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter during a court hearing held Tuesday, Aug. 5.

Teri Rhodes, now 19 but 18 at the time of the incident, is expected to be sentenced later this year now that it appears the case has come to a resolution. She reportedly faces 10 to 20 years in prison.

Rhodes was charged with homicide, as well as abusing a corpse and concealing the death of a child. She was released from custody after posting a \$25,000 bond late last year.

In May, the case had been indefinitely postponed due to what some have reported as questions about how the case should proceed.

Details of what was discussed immediately prior to the Friday, May 23 hearing in which the case was delayed were not made available to the public.

Rhodes' baby was found dead on Sunday, Aug. 12, 2007, inside a plastic bag on the shower floor in Rhodes' campus apartment in Erie, Penn.

According to investigators, Rhodes, a volleyball player for Mercyhurst College in Erie, Penn., allegedly gave birth to a girl on Aug. 12 and was later taken to a local hospital complaining of severe abdominal pain.

Officials reportedly found the infant sometime after Rhodes was taken to the hospital. After initially denying she had been pregnant, Rhodes allegedly conceded that she had given birth to the child.

Police confiscated Rhodes' computer and stated recent Internet searches allegedly had been conducted on, among other things, "what can kill a fetus."

[Andrew Sawmiller](#) is a staff writer for the Spinal Column Newsweekly

Court shakes rec providers in ruling on kids' safety

Injury waivers parents sign don't guard against lawsuits

BY L.L. BRASIER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 15, 2008

In a decision that could affect thousands of kids' programs and parents statewide, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled this week that schools, churches, summer camps and other businesses that provide recreational services to children can be sued if a child is injured, even if parents signed a waiver.

The court, in a unanimous decision, said a pre-injury waiver -- a commonplace contract parents sign wherever kids go to play -- cannot be used to block a lawsuit if a child is hurt. Under Michigan law, the court said, a parent does not have the right to forgo future damages by signing a waiver.

Those who provide camps and services for kids predicted the ruling would increase insurance rates that likely would be passed on to families. They said the ruling also would increase the possibility of new and unnecessary lawsuits.

Children's advocates, however, praised the ruling as another step in protecting kids. And legal experts predicted the ruling would be appealed to the state Supreme Court.

"It's becoming more and more burdensome to do business," said Brian Foster, co-owner of Stars and Stripes Gymnastics Academy in Clarkston. More than 1,000 students participate there each week.

On Thursday, 150 children were enrolled in summer camps there, cooking, tumbling and painting. Foster said his insurance rates already have quadrupled since 2002, and he predicted a new increase in light of the ruling

-- though he and other service providers couldn't say how much because the ruling is so new.

"My guess is that this will be seen by the insurance companies as a way to jab us again, and then we have no choice but to pass it on," he said.

But children's advocates said the ruling was the right move.

"I think this is a reasonable decision in that it does protect children," said Jack Kresnak, president of Michigan's Children, a statewide advocacy group. "Parents have to be careful on where they send their kids, but the programs and church groups have to know that they must do everything reasonably possible to ensure that the children are protected."

The court acknowledged the decision could make it tougher to do business.

"While this ruling has significant and far-reaching implications regarding ... organizations and businesses providing valuable services and activities for minor children, and has the potential to increase litigation and impact the availability of programs to younger members of the community, we have no alternative but to recognize the current status of our law and follow its precepts," the three-member panel ruled.

"The decision in this case is important because it serves as an affirmation of the priority we place on the protection of the health and well-being of our children," the court noted.

The decision, by Judges Richard Bandstra, Michael Talbot and Bill Schuette, was prompted by a lawsuit in Kent County filed by a family after their 5-year-old suffered a broken leg while at Bounce Party, a play center in Kentwood with large inflatable play equipment.

The father had signed a waiver agreeing not to hold the center responsible if the child was injured. The family sued anyway.

A circuit court dismissed the lawsuit in 2006, noting the waiver. The appellate court reinstated the suit Tuesday. Efforts to reach the family were unsuccessful.

Although the ruling is too new to tell what increase in costs it might bring, some camps predicted little impact.

The owners of Oakland Yard Athletics, a Waterford facility with 3,300 kids enrolled in 70 camps this summer, said they have never depended on waivers as protection.

"If ever pressed in court, a waiver isn't going to protect us like a Teflon shield anyway," co-owner Philip Douse said. "If we're negligent, we should get sued."

Instead, he said, his camp focuses on keeping the ratio of counselors to campers low and emphasizes safety training and adequate equipment. As a result, few kids have been injured.

"We just try to position ourself, as a business, to make sure the kids are safe, and that's worked for us," he said.

Like many others, Douse said any increase in insurance would be passed on to families. But he predicted the cost would be minimal.

Legal experts said the decision likely would be appealed.

"I'm sure this is going to be the subject of a Supreme Court appeal," said Carl Rashid, an attorney at Butzel Long in Detroit who handles appellate cases and predicted the ruling would result in more lawsuits against camps, schools and businesses. "They're going to want to look at this."

Contact L.L. BRASIER at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.

Child ID Program will be presented by local Masons

By Amanda VanAuker
The Coldwater Daily Reporter

Thu Aug 14, 2008, 09:43 PM EDT

COLDWATER — According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), an average of 2,185 children are reported missing every day. The names of the lost stick in the minds of people who have seen their pictures and heard their stories.

The job of finding these missing children lies not only with law enforcement, but with individuals and communities with open ears and eyes. Hoping to make that task easier are the Masons of Michigan.

On Saturday, Aug. 16, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Coldwater Masonic Temple, the Masons will be presenting the Michigan Child ID Program (MICHIP), which will allow parents and guardians to put together a "Child ID Kit." The kit will contain vital information necessary to help law enforcement — and the public — locate missing children.

Feds to take annual fee out of some Michigan child support checks

Posted by [jseim](#) August 15, 2008 08:21AM

Starting next month, some parents who receive child support checks will see an annual fee of \$25 taken out of their checks as part of a new federal law.

The change -- which was outlined in a recent letter sent to custodial parents by the state's child support office -- is expected to net nearly \$3 million a year. Most of that money will be sent to the federal government to reduce its budget deficit.

The fee applies only if the parent does not receive food stamps for a child, does not and never has received cash assistance, and has received at least \$500 in child support, said Marilyn Stephen, director of the Department of Human Services' Office of Child Support.

And Stephen said state officials are grateful the federal legislation allows an exception for families in poverty.

"We have no choice but to abide by the federal law," she said.

Annual deduction

What: Starting in September, the state will begin deducting a \$25 yearly fee from some child support checks.

Why: States are required to collect the fee as part of the Federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 to help pay for services provided by the child support program.

Does it apply to all cases? No. It applies only if the parent does not receive food stamps for a child, does not and never has received cash assistance and has received at least \$500 in child support.

Is it \$25 per child? No. The fee applies to each case, which may involve multiple children.

SOURCE: Michigan Office of Child Support

But one Rockford mother said she is annoyed the federal government is taking money from kids.

LuAnne Finlayson said, even though it will not be a hardship to have the fee taken out of the child support payments she receives for her daughter, she objects on principle.

"Why is this coming out of the mouths of babes to pay the federal deficit?" Finlayson said. "I think the whole thing is an outrage."

Finlayson said she also is upset with state officials because the federal legislation gives different options for collecting the fee, but Michigan has chosen to withhold funds intended for kids instead of collecting it from the non-custodial parent or paying it directly out of the general fund.

But Colleen Steinman, a spokeswoman for the state human services department, said how each state chooses to pay the fee depends on how it operates its child support payment system.

In Michigan, the change required legislative action.

"The Michigan legislators determined that it would be handled in this way," she said.

The fee potentially affects about 240,000 cases of the state's 700,000 cases, Stephen said.

About \$16 of each \$25 collected will be sent to the federal government.

The remainder will be funneled into the state's child support program.

Categories: [Courts & Crime](#), [Featured](#), [Politics](#)

Comments

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UAW endorses Bay Health Plan

Posted by [The Bay City Times](#) August 15, 2008 09:13AM

The United Auto Workers Region 1D on Thursday endorsed the Bay Health Plan to help working families who have no employer-provided health plan and who are not eligible for state and federal programs.

"The UAW stands behind this grassroots effort to expand access to affordable health care for the working families of Bay County," Dave Ventrone, chairman of the Bay County UAW CAP Council, said in a press release. "We encourage all UAW members, retirees and their families to support this ballot initiative by voting 'Yes to Health' on Nov. 4."

The proposed tax would provide basic health care for families who are legal residents of Bay County. Its supporters say the plan will:

- Cover doctor's visits, cancer screenings, X-rays, lab tests.
- Include a prescription program, disease prevention and expanded vaccination programs for children and seniors.
- Help lower prescription drug costs.
- Provide early treatment and testing for diabetes, respiratory diseases and other serious illnesses.

The County Board is expected to vote on placing the measure on the ballot during a special 5 p.m. meeting Tuesday at the County Building, 515 Center Ave. If approved by voters in November, a 0.67-mill tax would fund the health care plan. The assessment works out to \$33.50 per \$100,000 of a home's market value.

UAW Region 1D covers 62 counties in western, central and northern Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula. The region includes the cities of Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Traverse City, Saginaw, Muskegon, Benton Harbor, St. Joseph, Escanaba and Marquette.

Help for health care



Three Rivers Health president/CEO Matt Chambers and Sturgis Hospital CEO Rob LaBarge listened as Bev Hammerstrom, former state legislator, spoke about integrated health care Wednesday.

By Terry Katz
Sturgis Journal
Fri Aug 15, 2008, 02:44 AM EDT

Centreville, Mich. -

People who need primary care and mental health services could soon have their needs met in one visit.

An educational session on a plan to integrate services was held Wednesday at Glen Oaks Community College.

It was a rare meeting attended by members of the Three Rivers Health, Sturgis Hospital and Community Mental Health of St. Joseph County boards.

Sturgis Hospital CEO Rob LaBarge welcomed guests.

Liz O'Dell, director of St. Joseph County CMH, introduced keynote speakers Donna Sabourin, director of the Washtenaw Community Health Organization and Bev Hammerstrom, former state legislator.

Three Rivers Health president/CEO Matt Chambers announced that an \$85,000 Rural Health Service Area grant has been awarded to begin making plans for integrated services.

While there are historical cultural differences between mental and physical health services, working together could save hospitals money and make life for patients easier.

In applying for the grant, a needs assessment had to be prepared.

According to the assessment, St. Joseph County is a rural, medically underserved and economically challenged county.

The county is medically underserved and it is difficult to recruit primary care and behavioral health providers because of the large number of uninsured and under-insured and the low reimbursement rates for Medicaid and Medicare.

The pool of available primary care doctors is also diminishing as more primary care doctors are retiring than entering the market from medical schools.

At Sturgis Hospital, 20-25 percent of those treated in the emergency room have no family physician.

Three Rivers Health has a total patient population that is represented by more than 50 percent of patients covered by either Medicaid or Medicare.

Public mental health services provided by St. Joseph County CMH where 80 percent of those served have Medicaid. Cutbacks in state funding and changes in eligibility requirements have resulted in many in need going untreated or undertreated.

Chambers said a recent study has found that people with serious mental illness are dying on average nearly three decades earlier than the general population. There is a high prevalence of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease in this population.

Chambers said there is growing evidence that an integrated approach linking mental health services in primary care settings improves clinical outcomes and has the potential to significantly enhance the quality of life for those with mental health problems.

This concept of integrated care will make the best use of limited resources to provide cost effective care for county residents.



Vaccinate kids

Friday, August 15, 2008

Grand Rapids Press

With the start of a new school year less than a month away for most students, parents need to be reminded that children still suffer and die from preventable diseases. Childhood immunizations are a safe and effective way for them to protect their children from more than a dozen diseases such as mumps and whooping cough. News from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) that more parents are opting out of vaccines is alarming. The agency is right to be stepping up efforts to inform and educate. This dangerous trend deserves a sustained, aggressive awareness campaign.

Michigan is not that far removed from a time when it had the lowest level of vaccinated children among all 50 states -- 61 percent in 1994. That rate has climbed to 80.7 percent and while an improvement, is still below the more than 90 percent goal and trailing other states.

This month, Immunization Awareness Month, MDCH officials reported an increase in whooping cough and mumps cases, two of 14 vaccine-preventable diseases targeted. There were 29 cases of mumps all of last year. Already there have been 34 this year. In 2007, there were 292 cases of whooping cough and so far 120 this year. There have been more cases of measles reported in the country in 2008 than in any year since 1997, more than 130 cases, including four in Michigan.

There are a host of reasons health officials say parents don't vaccinate their children, including religious objections. Some may not be aware that if they have no insurance or are underinsured, they can get the shots for free from local health departments and other providers through the Vaccines for Children program.

Others are under the misguided impression that because the diseases the vaccines prevent are uncommon there's no need to get immunized. That couldn't be further from the truth. The diseases are uncommon because of the vaccinations.

In recent years, there has also been a growing concern that vaccines may have an effect in causing autism. The fear of parents is certainly understandable, but health officials insist there is no credible, scientific proof of that link. Parents should talk to their family doctors before putting their children -- and other children -- at risk.

Schools and child care centers are not supposed to admit children who have not supplied documentation confirming the required vaccinations. Well-child checkups, back to school and sports physicals are good times for parents to check their children's immunization status.

Parents must protect their children from diseases that are preventable. Health professionals have to be vigilant, too, in seizing opportunities to engage parents about the importance of their children being vaccinated.

Increasing the number of children immunized is going to take a collective effort with state and local health officials at the forefront to avoid new outbreaks of diseases we should already have conquered.

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Saginaw Soup Kitchen Stuff-a-Bus fundraiser moves

Posted by The Saginaw News August 15, 2008 05:17AM

Saginaw's East Side Soup Kitchen is parking its Stuff-a-Bus in the former Kmart parking lot at Schust and Bay in Saginaw Township to collect canned food donations.

They will accept donations from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Aug. 22 and 23.

The location of the annual collection moved from Green Acres Plaza as renovations are completed at the shopping center.

The soup kitchen needs an assortment of canned goods, including individual serving size pudding cups, fruit cups, drinks, packaged cookies, coffee, canned green beans, corn, peas, fruit cocktail, peaches, pears, tuna and pork and beans. They will not accept perishable items or foods in glass containers. They will accept cash donations.

In its 14th year, Stuff-a-Bus provides food to feed youngsters at after-school meal sites throughout Saginaw.

For information on the Stuff-a-Bus campaign contact Pam Cole, soup kitchen director, at 755-3663.

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Ypsilanti Courier

Letters To The Editor

'Hobo' isn't viewed

as a derogatory term

In particular, this letter is to the attention of the woman who left a call at the Southern Michigan Railroad Society's museum without leaving her name or phone number and spoke on the issue of dressing as a "hobo" for a special event at the railroad on Aug. 8. Her comment indicated that our request to "dress as a hobo" was offensive and insensitive to the numbers of individuals who are homeless in America.

Too often we all jump to stereotypical images and see the image of a hobo as shabbily dressed with holes in the shoes, and a hand out begging for food, which is further from the historical truth.

There is no real way to visually describe who is or isn't a hobo as they have no uniform nor style of dress. In fact, most are dressed in long-sleeved shirts and denim pants, and a ball cap with work boots the norm. They carry some sort of backpack with their extra clothes, utensils and food. They are mostly men -- there are women too -- who have chosen this wandering lifestyle.

Most hobos are not homeless. Many have left families to find work in other towns, and most all hobos worked for food or a place to sleep at night. There is quite a distinction between a hobo and a "tramp" or "bum," who also traveled, but who rarely worked, preferring to beg or steal.

Some hobos left because they didn't want to be bound by time schedules, or homes, or job expectations, and wanted to live, sleep and travel where they wanted. Most know where seasonal work crops up and travel to those areas, which have existed since the founding of this country and mostly involve agricultural work.

To get from one place to another quickly was by jumping on board a train and hopefully not getting caught by the railroad police.

A code of honor exists among hobos that includes respect of local law and officials, and if someone was in a vulnerable situation whether they are locals or other hobos, not to take advantage of them.

If no employment was available, then they made work developing their own talents and crafts. They pitched in and helped others and don't allow other hobos to molest children, reporting them to authorities. In fact, many hobos talked with runaway children to induce them to return home.

And, they didn't like it any more than you or I to run around in dirty clothes

or without a bath. They made use of facilities to take care of these matters.

The history of railroading includes many adventures, including the hobos living in camps along the rail line. Designed with a little fun, after all, who ever heard of "Hobo Pizza," this event was created to provide the public with history of railroading while ushering in our 26th year of operating a railroad museum in Lenawee County.

Our world has cancer patients running in marathons, physically challenged children displayed on posters, and clowns painting faces at hospitals and festivals, all designed to raise money for charitable causes. These activities also may be considered offensive and insensitive to some individuals who lost a family member with cancer or has a child needing serious help. But without the real knowledge behind the program, are you really able to just leave your thoughts on the answering machine without your name or phone number to call you back?

The Southern Michigan Railroad Society recognizes the homeless population and others in need, and has since Sept. 11, 2001, held charitable donation trains to help with food stores and stockings for holiday baskets. During our Grandparents Weekend train excursions Sept. 6 and 7, we will be asking our passengers to bring can goods in exchange for discounted train fares as we again give back to our communities.

Cynthia Given

President

Southern Michigan

Railroad Society

Clinton

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Friday, August 15, 2008

More Michigan jobless can't get benefits

About two-thirds of them don't qualify or wait too long to apply.

Louis Aguilar / The Detroit News

As the number of unemployed grows in Michigan, an increasing number of people who are out of work also are not getting unemployment benefits, according to recently released data.

A monthly average of 37 percent of unemployed Michigan residents received benefits in 2007, down from 41 percent in 2006 and among the lowest rates recorded, according to the U.S. Labor Department. That means about 227,600 of those without a job didn't get any of the money intended to help them survive.

Anecdotal and initial data collected by Michigan Works!, the agency that deals with the unemployed, shows that figure is growing this year.

"It's when I need help the most is when I can't get it," said Marvin Mayes, who worked at a car wash that went out of business. With an annual salary of \$8,000, Mayes made about half of what is required to qualify for benefits. The 56-year-old Detroiter said he's given up his rental home, moved in with his daughter and often eats a bowl of soup and a single sandwich a day to survive.

LaVonya Connell, also a Detroit resident, tried to get by on unpredictable temp work last year, but didn't work enough hours to qualify for benefits. And Kristen Casey, who has an associate degree in radiography, simply exhausted her 26 weeks of benefits -- though she recently was able to receive the 13-week extension that became available last month.

Meanwhile, David Esquivel, like many laid-off construction workers, said he didn't bother to apply because he never thought he would be out of work for any length of time. Other workers missed out on benefits because they wait too long to apply for them.

"The system hasn't kept pace with changes in the labor market and the global economy," said Rick McHugh, an Ann Arbor attorney and Midwest coordinator of the National Employment Law Project, a labor advocacy group.

The 63 percent of Michigan's jobless residents not getting benefits mirrors the national average. The trend began more than two decades ago, U.S. Labor Department data shows. And advocates and unemployment officials say it is accelerating, particularly in states such as Michigan, which is going through a fundamental economic change amid a vast restructuring of the auto industry.

The trend shows that the New Deal-era system of unemployment benefits, called unemployment insurance, is out of date with a 21st-century work force that includes part-time employees, people who must change jobs often and those paid at the bottom of the scale, labor advocates say.

"It's based on an economy of traditional male breadwinners, mainly manufacturing workers, who punched in and punched out and stayed at one company for most of their career," McHugh said. "That doesn't even describe the current work force in a manufacturing state like Michigan."

About one in five U.S. workers is a part-time employee, national labor data show. But rules requiring a minimum number of hours worked in a specific time period leave workers such as Connell ineligible for unemployment insurance. After getting just 10 hours of office work a week during the holidays last year, Connell stopped trying to rely on temp work to get by.

"Like a lot of people I know, you get by from work on the side," the 28-year-old said. "You know, selling T-shirts at a concert, helping out at a beauty store, maybe a bar. Some people do a lot more illegal things to get by."

The growing number of people missing out on benefits reflects the state's weak economy and 8.5 percent jobless rate, well over the national rate of 5.7 percent and one of the highest in the nation.

In Wayne and Macomb counties, excluding Detroit, 81 percent of the people who visited Michigan Works! offices in June were not getting benefits. That percentage has been growing steadily for more than a year.

"The extension of benefits helped, but the job market is still very tight, and not everyone was eligible for the extension," said Sonia Harb, director of employment training for the Dearborn Michigan Works! office.

The irony is that the number of jobs in the area has been steadily growing in the past year, with more than 11,000 now available. And many Michigan Works! officials say that the resources for training unemployed workers have vastly improved in the past few years. They credit the No Worker Left Behind program, training aimed specifically at laid-off auto workers and other programs that prepare people for work in alternative energy, health care and other fields. But unemployed workers who don't get benefits say they can't focus on learning a new career in unpaid training programs when they're scrambling to make ends meet.

"It's like being stuck at the bottom," said Casey, the unemployed X-ray tech. "It's tough to concentrate on that training and other stuff if you're so focused on daily survival, like eating."

You can reach Louis Aguilar at laguilar@detnews.com.

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